Friedreich's ataxia is a rare disease that affects 1 in 50,000 people. I am one of them. I was diagnosed with FA in 1992 at the age of twelve. Growing up was quite typical. I hit all the appropriate milestones, played on several sports team, and was involved in several activities. I always seemed to be a clumsy child, walking and running slightly awkwardly but me and my family brushed it off until a routine trip to the pediatrician. The pediatrician was very concerned at my wide gait and sent us to a neurologist. After several visits, several months, several locations, several tests, and several doctors, I walked away with a back brace for scoliosis and a life shortening and life altering diagnosis.

High school was filled with high school drama and fun but I had an added worry of trying to not fall over, and not let my friends see what was happening to me. In my college years it was not as easy to hide my FA. I was falling too much so I had to get a wheelchair. I thought my life was over.

FA has taught me although I am in a wheelchair, life is not over. I just need to do things differently. I have been skiing, skydiving, and parasailing. I ride a trike and on my Dads motorcycle. I work full time in an oncology clinic, drive my own car, and live in my own little bachelorette pad! The tattoo on my wrist says "live your dreams". Living with FA forces me to remember this each day.